

Public Overwhelmingly Responds to DEA Prescription Drug Take-back

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The United States Drug Enforcement Administration today announced the overwhelmingly successful results of the first-ever national prescription drug “Take-Back” campaign. The American public turned in more than **242,000 lbs** of prescription drugs for safe and proper disposal. More than **4,000 take back sites** were available in all 50 states this past Saturday, and Americans responded in huge numbers.

“The Take-Back Campaign was a stunning nationwide success that cleaned out more than **121 tons of pills** from America’s medicine cabinets, a crucial step toward reducing the epidemic of prescription drug abuse that is plaguing this nation,” said DEA Acting Administrator Michele M. Leonhart. “Thanks to our state and local law enforcement and community partners—and the public—we not only removed these dangerous drugs from our homes, but also educated countless thousands of concerned citizens about the dangers of drug abuse.”

Congress cleared legislation for the President on Wednesday that will allow DEA to create a framework for a permanent solution for prescription drug disposal. Currently, there are no legal means to transfer possession of certain prescription drugs for disposal. Until permanent regulations are in place, however, DEA will continue to hold one-day take-back programs.

“I applaud Congress for recognizing the magnitude of this threat to public health and safety and passing the Secure and Responsible Drug Disposal Act of 2010, which will provide Americans with safe, environmentally sound ways to dispose of unused or expired prescription drugs,” said Leonhart.

“I commend the DEA under Acting Administrator Leonhart’s leadership for its efforts in coordinating this important nationwide prescription drug take-back effort” said Office of National Drug Control Policy Director Kerlikowske. “More than 70 percent of people who abuse prescription drugs get them from friends or family – often from the home medicine cabinet. Expanding take-back efforts nationwide is a key strategy in preventing prescription drug diversion and abuse, while safeguarding the environment.”

DEA and other law enforcement working at disposal sites around the country reported huge turnouts of people ridding their medicine cabinets of unused or unwanted drugs. For example,

in Troy, Missouri, a man literally brought his kitchen drawer full of medication to the collection site to empty. At another site in Jacksonville, Ill., a woman brought in nearly 50 years' worth of medicines for disposal.

This initiative addresses a vital public safety and public health issue. More than seven million Americans abuse prescription drugs, according to the 2009 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Survey on Drug Use and Health. And every day, on average, 2,500 teens use them to get high for the first time, according to the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet.

Other participants in this initiative include the Partnership for a Drug-Free America; the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy; the Federation of State Medical Boards; and the National District Attorneys Association; the National Association of Attorneys General and Association of Chiefs of Police.